

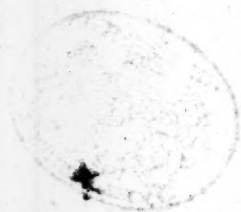
A N^o 7
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the
CONSECRATION
OF THE
Right Reverend Father in GOD,
G E O R G E
Lord Bishop of St. *David's*,

I N
Lambeth Chappel, on Sunday, April 29. 1705.

By JOHN WATGH, D. D. Rector of
St. Peter's Cornhill, and Chaplain to the Right
Honourable FRANCIS Lord Guilford.

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OF THE
L^d. Bishop of *St. David's*.

Heb. XIII.†17.—

*Obey them that have the rule over you,
and submit your selves.*

AT the Seventh Verse of this Chapter the Holy *Apostle*, to promote the main design of this *Epistle*, which was to prevent the general *Apostasie* of the believing *Jews*, in those times of Persecution, proposes to their imitation, the constancy and perseverance of their first Guides and Instructors in the *Faith*, who were then dead,

dead, and who had laid down their lives for the Truth: *Remember them, which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their Conversation.* And in Subserviency, I suppose, to the same Design, he exhorts them, in the *Text*, to pay all due Obedience to the living Guides and Governours of the Church, as to those, who *watch over, and for their Souls*; and who must be accountable to God for them; *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: For they watch for your Souls, as they that must give account.*

There are three things, which the words naturally suggest to us, to be inquired into, not unsuitable, I hope, to the occasion.

First; Who the Persons are, to whom Obedience and Submission is here required?

Secondly, With what *Power* and *Authority* they are invested? And

Thirdly, Wherein the *Obedience*, that is to be pay'd them does consist?

I. As to the first of these Inquiries, *Who they are to whom Obedience and Submission is required*, it will be needless to spend much time upon it. For though the word ἡγούμενοι, which the *Apostle* here uses, does indeed signify any kind of *Rulers*; yet the Circumstances of the Context do necessarily restrain it to *Ecclesiastical, or Spiritual Rulers*. For they are the *Rulers*, that in the 7th Verse are said to *have spoken unto the Hebrews the word of God*; and in the *Text*, to *watch for their Souls*, and to be accountable for the faithful discharge of that great trust. Which Characters,

ractions, as they fully imply the nature of the Charge, and the Office of the Guides and Governours of the Church, so they are applicable to no other sort of Governours besides them. So that the Persons, whom *St. Paul* requires them to obey, and submit themselves to, must, doubtless, be those *Apostles*, or *Apostolical Men*, the *Bishops* and *Pastors* of the Church, by whom they had been instructed in the faith of Christ, and who then administered the Affairs of his Spiritual Kingdom.

And because the office of Instructing and Governing the Church, was not confined to their Persons, nor was to end with their Lives; but to continue in the Church, while the Church continued in the World; therefore they, who derive their Commission and Authority by a constant and regular Succession from them, are the same Spiritual Rulers and Guides, whom the Christians of all Ages are bound to obey. Thus the *Bishops*, and *Presbyters* of the Church of *England*, the former as *Superior* and *Chief*, the latter as *Subordinate*, and in their degree, are the lawful Spiritual Governours of all the People within their several Precincts, to whom the duty of Submission and Obedience is to be paid. For whatever the Adversaries of *Episcopacy* may plead for a Community of Ministers determining Church-Affairs, instituted by Christ and his Apostles, surely nothing can be more evident to an unprejudiced Mind, than a Subordination and Imparity of Gospel-Officers in *their* times, and a continued Succession of them to our *own*. But this will appear from the consideration of their Commissions, and the exercise of their Offices conformable to their Commissions, which naturally belongs to the

II. Thing

II. Thing propos'd, where we are to enquire in- to the *Power* and *Authority*, wherewith the Persons to whom Obedience and Submission is to be paid, are invested.

We read in the 28th Chapter of St. *Matth.* Ver- ses 18, 19, 20, that our *Blessed Saviour* immediately before his Ascension into Heaven, having received all Power from God the Father, gave a new and full Commission to the *Twelve Apostles*, to dispose and manage all Affairs relating to his Church. Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you : And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World. We read likewise, S. *Joh.* 20. 21. which seems to be the same Commis- sion in other words, that he told them, that as his Father had sent him, so he sent them : And that when he had said this, he breathed upon them ; and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever Sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever Sins ye retain, they are retained.

The *Twelve Apostles*, in pursuance of this Com- mission, which was given particularly to them, as Christ's immediate Substitutes and Vicegerents on Earth, did always act with an Authority Superior to that of other Church-Officers. For though they did not take upon them to teach new Doctrines, and Precepts, and impose the observance of them upon all Christians, as necessary to Salvation, as some of their Successors have done since, yet they did every thing within these Bounds and Limits, set them by their wise Lawgiver, that were most fit to promote the great ends of his Religion. For besides those
Acts,

Acts, which are common to them with the Subordinate Officers of the Church, such as Preaching, and Propagating the Gospel, Administring the Sacraments, and offering up publick Prayers and Intercessions for all Christians; they did exercise several others, which properly belonged to them, as *Governours* of the Church. They formed and settled Churches, made Laws and Canons for their Security, and prescribed Rules of Decency and good Order in them. They constituted and ordained Officers, some Temporary, upon special and emergent Occasions, others that were to be of standing and perpetual use throughout all Generations; and in such a Subordination to one another, as would be effectual to preserve a lasting establishment of Peace, and good government in the Church. Further, they determined Controversies, composed Differences, received Accusations, and punished Offenders. They censured the Scandalous, excommunicated the Contumacious, and absolved the Penitent. They exercised an Authority over the *Ordinary Pastors* and *Teachers* in the several Churches, planted by themselves or others; especially such as were more immediately subject to them.

But the several branches of this Commission, as exercised by the *Apostles*, will more fully appear from hence, that the *Authority* conferred upon them in virtue thereof, was superior to that of the *Seventy Disciples*, who were an Order of *Ecclesiastical Ministers* distinct from them. For though the *Seventy* received their Commission immediately from *Christ*, as well as the *Apostles*; and in their first Mission, had the same Power given them to preach the Gospel, to cure Diseases, and dispossess Devils, that these

had ; yet methinks that particular Care, which our Saviour took in praying for, and instructing these *Twelve*, more than the rest of his Followers, together with the Solemnity of their *Inauguration* to the *Apostleship*, as mentioned in Scripture, does plainly imply, that they were Superior to all others in their Office and Employment. And we can hardly doubt, but that some special *Powers* and *Privileges* were intrusted with them; which were not common to all the rest; as was the power of conferring the Holy Ghost, by *laying on of Hands*, which belonged peculiarly to the *Apostles*. We learn from *Acts* 8. that when *Philip*, one of the Seven *Deacons*, had by his Preaching, and Miracles Converted, and afterwards Baptized, the People of *Samaria*, two of the *Apostles* were sent from *Jerusalem*, to lay hands on them; whereupon it is said, that they received the Holy Ghost, Ver. 17.

We may moreover observe, that in those Catalogues of Gospel-Officers, which St. Paul gives us, *1 Cor.* 12. 28. and *Eph.* 4. 11. he still places the *Apostles* in the first Rank; *God hath set some in the Church, First, Apostles; Secondly, Prophets; Thirdly, Teachers: Are all Apostles, are all Prophets, are all Teachers?* So again, *He gave some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers, &c.* And how zealous is he, who at another time styles himself the *least of the Apostles*, *1 Cor.* 15. 9. to magnifie the dignity of his Office, when a Party of troublesome *Corinthians*, siding with some Teachers more than others, endeavoured to lessen and decry his Authority, though the Founder of their Church, to raise the esteem of other *ordinary Pastors?* which he would hardly have done, if he had not known, that

that by an immediate Election and Commission from Heaven, when he was so miraculously called to be the chief *Apostle* of the *Gentiles*, he had received an eminency of Power and Authority from Christ, enabling him to discharge all acts of Religion, relating either to *Ministry* or *Government*, above any of the *Seventy Disciples*, or ordinary *Teachers*.

Well, we here see then, that between these two distinct Orders of Gospel-Ministers, which were of our Saviour's own Institution, there was a plain Disparity, the one being Superior to the other in *Office* and *Jurisdiction*; and therefore if they were designed by him to be perpetual and standing Orders in his Church, there must still be a Disparity between them, still some *Superior* Officers to preside over other *Inferior* ones. For otherwise our Lord's Institution will not be preserved; if there be not *Apostles*, as well as *Presbyters*, that is, Successors to them in their respective Offices, the distinction of Ecclesiastical Orders appointed by him in his Church, will be taken away, and a new Form of Government introduced. And till Men can shew, either that in the present State of the Church the reason of Christ's Institution is ceased, or that he has abrogated and repealed it, neither of which can ever be proved, it must be intolerable Presumption in them, to set up a new Model of their own framing, different from that of our Saviours.

If any one should pretend, that Christ's Institution was calculated only for the Infancy of the Church, and was to be laid aside by her, when further advanced, and therefore the first Distinction of Orders and Functions ought not to be kept up now; I will in the next place shew, that it was

not designed to be a *Transient*, but a *Lasting* Constitution, or that all the ordinary Power of the *Apostolick Office*, as it was received by Commission from *Christ*, was to be continued, for the Welfare of the Church in its *Ministry* and *Government* to all following Ages. I say all the ordinary Power, for as to the extraordinary Gifts, wherewith the *Apostles* were endued, it is agreed on all hands, that they were only temporary, and did expire when the reason for which they were given ceased, being intended only for the more speedy planting and propagating, not the perpetuating of the Church. But the Sacred *Apostolate* in its ordinary Ministrations, as preaching the Word, discipling by Baptism, consecrating the Eucharist, ordaining to the Priesthood, receiving Complaints, hearing Causes, deciding Controversies, superintending both Pastors and People, judging, chastising, and ejecting out of the Church the Contumacious, defending the Truth, opposing Error, maintaining Uniformity, and preserving Order in Sacred Things, was to be continued by succession in the Church, throughout all Ages of the World. For what else can be the meaning of that Promise made by Christ to the *Twelve Apostles*, for their Encouragement in the Work they were sent about, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the World?* It is plain that we cannot with any probability understand by the Phrase *ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος*, the end only of that Age wherein the Apostles lived; but, as it is almost every where else in Scripture used, especially in this Gospel, the *End of the World*, or the Day of Judgment. And if so, this Promise, which was primarily made by *Christ* to the *Apostles*, or rather to their Office in its ordinary

Matth. 13.
39, 40, 49.

ordinary Privileges, must necessarily be extended to all those, that should afterwards succeed them in that Office to the end of the World. That the *Apostles* themselves understood it so, is evident from their Practice, who pursuant thereunto, and without any new Commission, at least that we know of, did in their own time, as they saw occasion, transfer to others the same Authority, which themselves had received from Christ. A plain Argument, that they did not look upon our Saviour's Institution of the *Apostolick Office*, so far as it concerns the Care and Government of Churches, as a temporary Expedient, confined to their Persons; but as a standing Form, to be handed down to other faithful Persons, to the end of the World. Accordingly when Christianity, through their Ministry, increased, and mightily prevailed in the World, they added to their Number several other *Apostles*, and appointed them to take care of the Government of those particular Churches, in which they fixed them. Thus *Epaphroditus*, who was none of the *Twelve*, is yet stiled the *Apostle* of the *Philippians*, Phil. 2. 25. because, as *Theodoret* upon the place concludes, the Episcopal Care of that Church was committed to him. And thus *S. Paul* promoted *Timothy* to the Church of *Ephesus*, and gave him Episcopal Authority both over the *Laity*, and *Clergy*, as is evident from those so very particular Directions, which he gives him in order to his Conduct, and the due Exercise of that Authority. To charge those who were to instruct others to teach no other Doctrine, than that which is according to Godliness: To prescribe Rules for the right performance of the several parts of the Publick Worship;

1 Tim.
1. 3.

1 Tim. ship; *Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving*
 2. 1. *of Thanks*: To enquire into the Qualifications of
 1 Tim. such as were to be ordained, and not to *lay hands*
 5. 22. *suddenly on any*: To take *Widows* into the Churches
 — v. 9. Service, or reject them: To receive *Accusations* even
 Ver. 19. *against Elders before two or three Witnesses*; and to
 judge and censure open Offenders: And to enforce
 Ver. 21. these his Directions the more upon him, he solemn-
 ly charges him before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ,
 and the elect Angels, that he observe these things, with-
 out preferring one before another, doing nothing by par-
 tiality.

Some of the same things are given in charge to
 Titus, whom St. Paul also raised from among the or-
 Tit. 1. 5. dinary Pastors to Episcopal Authority over the
 Churches of Crete: As, that he should set in order
 the things that were wanting there, and ordain Elders
 in every City, as he had appointed him. And that the
 Power thus conferred upon him, extended to a Ju-
 risdiction over the People, and those whom he had
 Ordained, is evident from other parts of this Charge,
 where he is commanded to stop the Mouths of the
 Unruly; to admonish an Heretick, and if that did
 not do, to censure and reject him: And moreover to
 rebuke Offenders with all Authority, or such Courage
 and Majesty, as became him to whose Inspection
 and Management God had committed the care of
 those Churches.

Now these Instructions given to Timothy and Ti-
 tus by one, who must be supposed to understand
 our Saviour's Institution, do plainly imply, that an
 Order of Men superior to Presbyters, was to conti-
 nue in the Church after the death of the Apo-
 stles.

files, to carry on the work they had begun; and that these and others, with whom the Government of particular Churches was entrusted, did by Divine Appointment succeed the *Apostles* in the ordinary Power and Ministry of the *Apostolick Office*. And for this reason, *Bishops* who did succeed them in this Power, are in Scripture; and the first Christian Writers, usually stiled *Apostles*, though in later Ages that Name has been given only to those, who received their *Apostleship* immediately from *Christ*.

The respective Bishops then of the Church of *England*, as by Law Established, who derive their Authority in a continued Line from the first Institution of the *Apostleship*; who were ordained by their *Predecessors*, they by *theirs*; and so upwards, till they ascend to *Christ*, the fountain of all Church-Power, are the true and lawful Successors of the *Apostles*. If they are not, the *Apostles* have no Successors at all, and then (which is impious to affirm) an Office, which *Christ* designed should be perpetual and standing in the Church; and an Order of Men, to whom he promised his Presence and Assistance to the end of the World, are utterly extinct. But if they be the true Successors of the *Apostles*, then I take it for granted, there is the same reason to obey them, that there was to obey the *Apostles*, and *Bishops* of the *Apostolick Age*; since their Employment and Charge is the same, they watch for our Souls, and are accountable to God for their Trust. Let us then enquire

III. place, wherein the Obedience and Submission due to our Spiritual Rulers does consist. And

I. It

I. It consists in an Awful Reverence and Honour for their Persons; which arises from a Twofold Relation, that belongs to them; *First*, as *Fathers*; *Secondly*, as *Governours*.

1 Cor.
4. 15.

1. As *Fathers*, who have begotten us in Christ, and fed and nourished us with the bread of Life. Upon which account a filial Duty and Respect belongs to them, and an honourable Acknowledgment of it is required from us by the *Apostle*, 1 Thess. 5. 12, 13. *We beseech you Brethren, to know them, which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their Works sake.* And for the same reason he himself calls *Onesimus, whom he had begotten to the faith in his Bonds, his Son*; *Philem. ver. 10.* As *St. John* frequently does those that were converted by his means, his *Children*, 1 Joh. ii. But because the ground of this Relation is common to the *Inferior Orders* with the *Superior*, inasmuch as all of them do in their several Stations contribute to our *Spiritual Birth*, I shall wave this Consideration, as not so directly in the way of this Discourse, and enquire,

2. What Honour and Reverence is due to our *Spiritual Rulers*, as *such*, as they are appointed by God to be his *Deputies*, and *Vicegerents* in things more immediately pertaining to the Peace and Government of his Church. And without doubt Men intrusted with a Special Commission to Act in God's Stead, to Represent his Person, and to manage the chief Affairs of his Spiritual Kingdom, must be intitled to more than ordinary measures of Esteem and Vene-

Veneration. For since the Credit of the Person representing, does not only rise in proportion to the quality of him whom he represents, but likewise to the nature of the Employment; they have in this respect the advantage of Men of all other Characters. Though all sorts of Governours derive their Authority from God, yet all are not employed in the great and everlasting concerns of another World. This is peculiar to the Rulers of Christ's Kingdom upon Earth, to those who succeed *him* and his *Apostles* in that Administration: And for this they are all highly to be esteemed; and some of them, those that *rule well, and labour in the Word and Doctrine*, that have spent themselves in the service of Religion, in bravely defending the Cause of Christianity against the common Enemy, and preserving the Church from the Corruptions of Error and Schism, *be counted worthy* 1 Tim. 5. 17. of double Honour. And therefore to cast any contempt upon these venerable Persons, either by injurious Actions, or Reproachful and Slandorous Speeches, is greatly displeasing to Almighty God, and of dangerous consequence to his Holy Religion. Whatever Dishonour or Indignity is offered to them, he hath promised to resent and punish, as if it were done to himself, in whose Name they act, and in whose Service they are employed: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me; Luke 10. 16.* And this is highly reasonable; for whatever is done or spoken to render them contemptible, does in fact bring a reproach upon their Profession, and in the issue, upon God himself, the Divine Author of it. There are few Men so ingenuous, as to distinguish between the Per-
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sons and their *Calling*; the World is generally so unjust to Religion, as to charge it with the faults and miscarriages of its Teachers and Professors. And therefore Men should be very cautious of saying things of them, whether true or false, that tend to their Disparagement, or Diminution, lest they wound Religion through their sides, and by vilifying their Persons, weaken their Authority. As this is the Duty of every private Christian, so especially of those of their own Order and Function, whose example will have a more pernicious influence towards the obstructing the efficacy of their Ministry, and disturbing the Peace and Unity of the Church. For many honest unwary Men will by their example be tempted to slight the Doctrine, and distrust the directions of their Spiritual Guides; and many loose and irregular Christians the more confirmed in their contempt of Religion, and their Disobedience and Opposition to the Laws and Censures of the Church.

2. The Governours of the Church having a Power inherent in them to make Laws, and prescribe Rules, for the decent and orderly performance of the Publick Worship, and the maintenance of Peace and Unity, we, as Subjects, are bound conscientiously to obey those Laws, and observe those Rules, in order to promote these good Ends. This is included in the very notion of a Christian Church, of which they are Governours, which is a regular and formed Society, distinct from all other Societies, and which cannot subsist without Rule and Subjection. The Body of the Church, as all other Bodies Politick, can never be kept in Unity, and good Order, without

out Government ; and no Government can stand, without an Obligation to obey and submit to it. And no Governours have a juster claim to the obedience of their Subjects, than the Governours of the Church, so long as they command nothing contrary to the Laws of God. For besides, that they have a more direct relation to God, who *hath all Power in Heaven and Earth*, and to whom *every knee should bow*, and every Creature pay Homage and Submission ; the subject matter of their Commands, or the things to which they require Obedience, whereon the Salvation and Eternal Interests of all Men depend, must have a more immediate influence upon the Wills and Affections of Men. There is no Man that wishes well to Religion, or hath a due regard to the glory of God, and the benefit of Souls ; but thinks himself obliged to submit to his Superiors in such things, as naturally tend to the Peace, Edification, and good Order of the Church. The first that we read of, who refused Obedience to their Governours in matters *Ecclesiastical*, were those discontented *Levites*, *Corah* and his Complices, because they were not preferred to the *Priesthood*, Numb. 16. And all those, who since that Rebellion have gone in the way of *Corah*, that is, imitated him in his Sedition against their Spiritual Rulers, how fair and specious soever their pretences have been, were prompted to it by Ambition, private Discontent, or some such Motive.

The *affecting Preheminence*, was the thing St. John ^{3 John} so much resents in *Diotrephes*, as the cause of his refusing to receive his Letters of Commendation to the Church, and of casting the Brethren that carried them out

out of the Communion of it. And an immoderate desire of Applause, and gaining of Profelytes to their corrupt Doctrines, was the chief occasion of the opposition that was sometimes made by *Hereticks* and false Teachers to the Authority of some of the *Apostles*. And we plainly find, that whatever Trouble and Disturbance they met with in the Administration of the Church, was generally from such Men. The inferior Pastors, who had no other aim but to discharge their Trust in propagating the Gospel of Christ, did not only pay a faithful and dutiful Obedience to their Commands, but were ready, upon all proper occasions, to attend and assist them in the labours of their Ministry. For as the *Wise-men*, and *Prophets* among the *Jews* had one to attend upon, and minister to them; so the *Apostles*, after Christs departure, had some of the Brethren to accompany and assist them in some parts of their

Acts 13. 5. Charge. Thus *Paul* and *Barnabas* had *John*, surnamed *Mark*, for their Minister, and Fellow-Labourer; who though once discouraged by the dangers he met with in their Travels, so far as to desert them; yet afterwards received from St. *Paul* this testimony of his Diligence and Zeal, that he was profitable to him for the Ministry. And thus *Timothy* and *Erastus* are mentioned, *Acts 19. 22.* among those who ministred to St. *Paul* at other times.

2 Tim.
34. 11.

These and others imployed in the same way, were generally well disposed to yield a chearful and punctual Obedience to the Commands of the *Apostles* in every thing that did apparently tend to promote the Affairs of the Gospel. They knew what Authority the *Apostles* had to command them, and what Obligations

ons they were under to obey ; and so were not wont to dispute Orders, or refuse their Attendance and Assistance, when required to carry on the same Work. And though this part of the *Apostolick Office*, which did consist in planting and visiting of Churches through the whole World is ceased ; yet since the several *Bishops*, who succeed them in the Care and Government of the Church, each within his Precinct, have all the ordinary Power and Authority of the *Apostles*, their respective Presbyters are without doubt obliged to yield Obedience to all their just Commands, so far as the State of Religion, and the Welfare of it in every Age shall require. What the Measures of that Obedience are, I shall not undertake to determine, these are regulated and set out, by the Temper of the particular Constitution, under which Men live, and are not always so easily discerned by every Person : But when the Testimonies clearly run on the side of Authority, and Men may have the opportunity to examine and compare them, there Opposition and Disobedience must be Blameable ; and even in doubtful Cases, a Man that comes with an honest and unprejudiced Mind, will think it safer, with respect to Conscience, to obey, than to disobey the Commands of his Spiritual Superiors. For, if he should be mistaken in his Reasonings about the Things in dispute, while he opposes a lawful Authority, I know not how he can excuse himself from the Breach of a plain and positive Law of God, and an *Apostolical Precept*, which enjoyns him to *obey them that have the rule over him, and to submit himself*. Whereas there is no such Danger on the other hand, in complying with
his

his Superiors in the Particulars, about which he is now supposed to doubt; because there is no known Law, no Precept of any *Apostle*, that forbids such a Compliance. This Argument concludes so strongly against all those, who do not condemn the Terms of Communion with our Church, and subjection to the Governours of it, as unlawful; that I cannot but wonder, especially since it hath been so often urged upon our Protestant Dissenters, that it hath convinced no more of them. But,

3. Another Branch of that Obedience, which is due to our Spiritual Governours, is a modest and discreet Deference to their Judgment and Integrity. For though they are subject to the like Passions and Infirmities with other Men, as Pride, Interest, and Faction, and so not to be relied upon with an implicate Faith, and blind Obedience: Yet in such Cases, wherein, after an honest and impartial Examination of the Things under Debate, no clear Light offers it self for our Conviction, we should so far submit our selves to them, as to acquiesce in what they advise, and to obey what they command. 'Tis most reasonable in such Cases to prefer the Judgment of our Spiritual Rulers to our own private Opinion, especially such of them as are of known Worth, Wisdom, and Integrity, and are seconded likewise by the Suffrage and Authority of some other Learned and Pious Men. For this is a Deference, which, in Matters of the greatest Concernment, we generally pay to the skilful of all Faculties, and almost to every private Man that we think wiser than our selves: And shall we refuse

to pay the same Respect to a Body of Men, whose special Office and Interest it is to consult and command for the best? We cannot take a safer Course in all Points, wherein we have not a more certain Rule to walk by, than to yield to the joint Determinations and Decisions of an Order of Men, whom, as God by his Providence has separated for this very thing, that they might advise and direct us what is best and fittest to be done, so he hath promised to afford them all needful Assistance to enable them to discharge that great Trust. And for a farther ground of Confidence in them, we ought to consider how much they are concerned in the right performance of this Duty; that they are answerable to God for their Directions and Conduct, and so cannot designedly misguide us, without great Guilt and Sin; and that they are obliged under the severest Penalties, not to abuse a Power which is committed to them in the quality of a Trust, by imposing any other Commands, than what are agreeable to the Will of God.

Upon these Considerations, as well as those of Peace and Order, and that Authority which they have to maintain them, it is very reasonable so far to comply with our Spiritual Governours, as to be concluded by their Judgment, in all Matters where the Light of our own Reason is not sufficient to direct us. And this happens in all those Cases where we remain uncertain (after our best Endeavours to satisfy our selves,) whether as to that Particular, wherein our Obedience is required, they do not exceed the just Limits of their Authority,
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by commanding something which is contrary to the Laws of God, and the Church. For supposing the Reasons are equal, or well nigh equal, on both sides, and there are learned Men, as well of the one Opinion, as of the other, the right of Commanding us, according to a known Rule in Law, being presumed to be on the side of our Superiors, who are in actual possession of that Power, we are bound to conform to their Judgment, till we are convinced that we err in so doing.

4. The last Thing which I shall mention as a material part of the *Apostle's* Admonition in the Text, is a quiet and patient submission to the Censures of our *Spiritual Rulers*; *Obeys them that have the rule over you, and submit your selves.* And this Obligation arises from that Power, which the Church of Christ hath to establish a Discipline, to which all her Members should be subject; and to exclude from her Communion all disorderly, profane, and rebellious Persons. Which Power the *Apostles* first received by an immediate Commission from Christ; and exercised it, as there was occasion, against those that proved refractory and disobedient to their Orders. And that it was to be continued to their Successors, *S. Paul's Epistles* to *Timothy*, and *Titus*, wherein he instructs them, how they ought to proceed in Matters of Discipline, and Church-Government, are undeniable Proofs; especially when backed with the known Practice of the whole Primitive Church, wherein this Discipline was observed with great strictness. And whilst it was so, Christianity grew, and Piety flourished, in the midst of

of Persecution. That wonderful Reverence, which the People had for their Governours, made them willingly submit to the most rigid Penances, and to suffer Shame, and undergo the greatest Severities in this World, that their Souls might be saved in the next. Though they paid all due Honour and Obedience to the *Civil* Magistrates, under whom they lived; yet they were awed and terrified with nothing so much as the Reproofs, and Admonitions of their *Bishops*. No Menaces of Corporal Punishment were half so prevalent to keep them within the bounds of Duty, as the shaking of the Spiritual Rod; nor any means so effectual to regulate Manners, and reclaim Sinners, as the fear of being removed from the Communion of the Church. And truly till the Christians of this degenerate Age, Pastors as well as their Flocks, can be brought to have a due Veneration for the Persons, and a just regard to the Authority of their Spiritual Superiors, it will be in vain to wish for the Restoration of the Ancient Discipline. For no Ecclesiastical Censures, Suspension, or even Excommunication, will have their due effect upon Scandalous Livers without this: The imposing such Penalties may scare Men from Sin upon prudent and politick Considerations, but not from Motives of Conscience. And so far they are useful; but that which gives them their full force and efficacy, is a settled perswasion of the Wisdom and Justice of those, who impose them, and of the Divine Power by which they act. This, and this only will oblige Men to submit to the Censures of their Spiritual Governours, (when justly inflicted) *for Conscience sake,*

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sake, and upon Religious Principles, a sense of God's Authority, wherewith these Governours are invested, and of their own Duty and Obligation to be subject to them. And because these Censures are imposed to restrain and reform Sinners, this will further oblige them to give such Publick Testimonies of their Sorrow and Repentance, as may prevail with their Superiors to receive them again into the Communion of the Church, which they had offended by their loose and disorderly living.

And if a due Honour and Reverence for the Governours of the Church be thus necessary, in order to engage Men to submit to the Ancient Discipline, if it were revived, and to accomplish those good Ends for which it was at first instituted; the best Method to make way for the Restoration of it to its pristine State, is for the Pastors of the Church, who most heartily pray for it, by frequent Instructions, and their own Example, to beget in the minds of the People a due Honour and Reverence for those, who by Commission from God are intrusted with the chief exercise of it. For till this be done, *their Censures* will not do much more towards the real Conversion and Amendment of Sinners, than the *Corporal Punishments* of the Civil Magistrate; *strict Penances*, and *long Fasts*, will work no more upon Men's Hearts, or bind their Consciences, while they slight and forget the Divine Character of those, who injoyn them, than *Fines* and *Imprisonments* will; nor to be cut off from the Communion of the Church sooner reclaim them from their evil Courses, than to be banish-

ed their Native Country ; the one as well as the other can only make Hypocrites, not true and sincere Penitents.

And now having gone through the several Heads, which I at first proposed from the Text, that is, having shewn what kind of Rulers are here spoken of, with what Power they are invested, and wherein that Obedience and Submission, which is due to them does consist, I only beg leave to make a short Inference or two from what hath been said ; *First*, With reference to our *Dissenters* ; and *Secondly*, To our *Selves*. And

I. Since, as hath been proved, the *Bishops* and *Presbyters* of the Church of God in these Nations, the *former* as *Superior* and Chief, the *latter* as *Subordinate* and in their Degree, are the lawful Spiritual Governours of all the People in their several Precincts ; then it greatly behooves those among us, who disown their Authority and have withdrawn their Obedience from them, to consider how they can answer it to God, and their own Souls. We desire nothing more than that they would compare their Objections against Obedience with the Reasons and Arguments that enforce it, and the Mischiefs, which naturally attend the denial of it ; but if *those*, when put into a just Balance, shall be found to be far lighter than *these*, what can justify their Disobedience and Separation ? Will the Plea of Christian Liberty, a tender Conscience, or any such Pretences, be sufficient to answer for the Contempt of lawful Authority, the disturbance of Peace,

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and the breach of that Order, which Christ hath settled in his Church? Can they think that God will excuse them for these and many more Mischiefs and Inconveniences, occasioned by their *Schism*, because they can plead some Scruples, and make some Exceptions against the Service and Government of our Church? 'Tis true, they have an Indulgence, which eases them of Temporal Penalties; but all sincere Christians will remember, that it is one thing to be freed from the Punishments of Men, and another to be justified in the Sight of God. However, I shall not pursue this Argument any farther, because the Persons I now speak of do not hear me, nor if they did, would, I fear, be persuaded, by any thing I can say, after so many learned and solid Treatises have in vain been written for their Conviction, to lay aside their unreasonable Prejudices, be subject to our Bishops, and return to the Communion of the Church.

2. Then, from what I have said it follows, that all those, who are zealous of the Honour, and Interest of the established Church, would do well (the more effectually to bring these Men to a better Conformity, and compliance with Her) to submit with cheerfulness to some smaller Hardships, if we could judge our Superiors capable of imposing them, rather than run the hazard of confirming others in their Disobedience. For since we can have no reason to doubt, but that they are obliged in point of Interest, as well as Conscience, to support the Authority, and secure the Rights of our National Church, where is the Danger or Hardship of submitting

mitting to their Determinations, in Things of less moment, and greater intricacy, for the promoting of such good Ends? The Peace, Order, and Unity of the Church are so desirable Things, so exceeding necessary to the advancement of the Honour of God, and the Happiness of Mankind, that every wise and good Man should be willing to sacrifice some Opinions of smaller Consequence to the Maintenance and Preservation of them. Next to the Truth of Doctrine, Purity of Worship, and Holiness of Life, there is nothing of greater Importance in a Christian Society, than that the Members of it behave themselves orderly and regularly in their several Stations; that Superiors gently Command, and Inferiors gladly Obey; that there be no Suspicions, Jealousies, Envyings, Personal Hatreds, and Factions, but Concord, Peace, and Unanimity among them, and a tender Affection and Sympathy with each other, as Members of the same Body. This is that Beauty of Holiness, and Christian Harmony, which attracts the eyes and admiration of Beholders, and for the obtaining whereof every true Disciple of Jesus Christ, should lend an helping Hand, and contribute his utmost Endeavours. And because there is nothing that disturbs this mutual agreement and acquiescence of Hearts and Minds so much as Disobedience and Opposition to lawful Authority, it should be the chief care both of Pastors and People, to behave themselves dutifully to those whom God has set over them, to preserve Order in the Church; to honour their Persons, revere their Character, make candid Constructions of the management of their Power, and to submit to it with
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Chearfulness, as far as they can without Sin. Such a behaviour as this will be an effectual means to engage the Spiritual Governours of all Ages, not to exceed the bounds of their Commission, or abuse that Authority which God hath given them; but on the contrary to exercise it with Equity, Prudence, and Moderation, and a most tender concern for the Edification and Quiet of the Souls under their Charge. And When *Bishops*, *Presbyters*, and *People*, those that govern, and those that are governed, move thus evenly in their several Ranks, and demean themselves thus peaceably in their several Relations, what further Happiness hath any Member of this National Church to wish for, than that he may from such a Communion and Fellowship of Saints upon Earth, be translated in God's good time to the ever blessed Society of Saints and Angels in Heaven; Whither God of his infinite Mercy bring us all, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, Adoration and Praise, henceforth and for ever more. *Amen.*

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